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Student Conduct Administrative Professionals: Relationships between Professional Identity, Training, Skills, and Experience

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Abstract

A diverse sample of 329 student conduct administrators, holding at least a Master's degree, participated in a study to explore whether their level of specialized training, their need to stay up-to-date on current trends, and mastery of specific skills sets met the necessary criteria to determine whether student conduct administration could be considered an independent and unique profession. Also explored was the relationship between tenure on the job and mastery of skills.

Student Conduct Administrative Professionals:

Relationships between Professional Identity, Training, Skills, and Experience

The functions performed by today's Student Conduct Administrators (SCA) bear only minimal resemblance to the functions performed by an SCA in the earliest days of higher education (Stoner II & Lowery, 2004). An SCA functioning in the field of higher education today is an educator, not strictly a disciplinarian, as the SCA was in the time of the colonial colleges (Association for Student Conduct Administration, 2012; Rudolph, 1962; Stoner II & Lowery, 2004; Waller, 2013). SCAs, today, conduct investigations, dialogue with all involved parties, and construct intentional and educational sanctions for infractions of the student code of conduct and other institutional policy violations by students (Association for Student Conduct Administration, 2012; Rudolph, 1962; Stoner II & Lowery, 2004; Waller, 2013). Additionally, the complexity of student conduct violations has increased over time.

In the earliest US institutions of higher education, early SCAs adjudicated a limited range of conduct violations and represented the role of institution as of *in loco parentis* (Gehring, 2006); today's student code violations can involve much more elaborate and hazardous conduct violations. These may include students gaining electronic access to examination answers and distributing the answers to an entire class, investigations into sexual assault or other criminal activity, as it relates to a student code violation, and other intricate violations (National Center for Higher Education Risk Management, 2014). To be an effective in today's higher education environment, it is necessary for the SCA to possess a multitude of skills and to be adept at utilizing these skills when investigating and adjudicating a wide variety of incidents (Dowd, 2012; Waller, 2013). It seems clear that today's fast-paced and highly collaborative, higher education environment requires SCAs to have specialized skills and training in order to carry out

the position responsibilities (Stoner II & Lowery, 2004). In addition to the necessary training, SCAs must also recognize that the application of these skills requires attention to the unique circumstances of each infraction. It is not possible to apply a “one size fits all,” “cookie-cutter” approach to handling student conduct referrals.

As noted, the most basic functions of student conduct have existed since the first institutions of higher education were established (Komives et al., 2003; Rudolph, 1962). The field of student conduct began to grow its professional roots in the 1930s, after publication of the *Student Personnel Point of View* and the growth of the Deans of Men and Deans of Women positions (American Council on Education, 1937). The first truly professional organization for SCAs was formed in 1989, the Association for Student Judicial Affairs (ASCA, 1993). However, even this formalization of the field combined with the increasingly specialized and diverse skills required, there has not prompted a study that could conclusively determine whether or not student conduct administration is a unique profession in its own right within the discipline of student affairs.

Review of the Literature

Exploring the construct of SCA professional identity is timely, given the level of scrutiny student conduct professionals experience by legislators and the parents of enrolled students (Kelderman, 2015a). The current level of professional scrutiny is the product of the assumptions of legislators and the public that SCAs fail to provide a fundamentally fair process for involved parties, especially in the area of student sexual assault (Kelderman, 2015b; U.S. Department of Education, 2011). However, SCAs provide a valuable service for students and the institution as a whole, by providing a fair process by which to resolve student code violations in an educational way that upholds the institutional mission and vision (Gehring, 2006; Waller, 2013). Effective

student conduct administration hinges on the professionalism of the individuals who carry out the responsibilities of this office. However, there is still the need for evidence that student conduct administration is, indeed, a unique and distinct profession.

Professional Identity as a Construct

The concept of professional identity has been acknowledged and examined in many fields, such as the trade crafts, primary and secondary education, counseling, and student affairs (Bodman, Taylor & Morris, 2012; Rickard, 1988; Williams, 1988; Young, 1985). Due to the diverse nature of professional fields, there is no single definition of the construct of professional identity that can be universally applied across all disciplines. Individual researchers have examined and attempted to identify various components that make up the construct of professional identity (Bodman et al., 2012; Prosek & Hurt, 2014; Williams, 1988; Wrenn & Darley, 1950; Young, 1985).

In the 1980s, Rickard (1985a, 1985b, 1988) looked tangentially at the construct of professional identity of student affairs personnel. According to Rickard (1988), professional identity is primarily constructed based on sociological criteria of the profession. As a student affairs professional, Rickard (1988) provided a figurative model of the various components of a professional paradigm, complete with various examples within the five layers of the construct. These layers included “foci,” “roles,” “skills,” “disciplines/professions,” “models & theories,” and “functional areas” (p. 391). Bodman et al. (2012) further added to this definition by noting that professional identity may be influenced by legislation and politics, which is highly applicable to the role of the student affairs personnel. This suggests that SCAs must maintain awareness of current trends in their discipline, any changes in law or policies related to their role, as well as understand the theoretical underpinnings of student conduct administration.

Professional Identity of Student Conduct Administrators

Scholars have explored the field of student conduct and SCAs as these relate to decision factors (Dowd, 2012; Hyde, 2014; Waller, 2013; Wannamaker, 2005). Effective SCAs must possess a strong understanding of nuance in order to properly execute the responsibilities of the SCA position, regardless of the institutional type. The fundamentals of field of student conduct have been molded over time through best practices, legislation, and case law (Waller, 2013). There is, however, currently no specific research on the professional identity of SCAs. The Board of Directors of the Association for Student Conduct Administration (ASCA) (2014) called on institutions and SCAs to gather and publish data regarding what an institution does to train its student conduct personnel, investigators, and adjudicators, and to highlight what factors are considered when decisions are made. It is clear that specific skills are necessary to administer just and fair sanctions for students as well as to understand the ways in which legal issues may influence the actions of SCAs on college campuses today. Further, it is clear that there is a call to further define the professional role and relevant preparation for SCAs as its status as a profession warrants consideration.

Wrenn and Darley's (1950) definition of a student affairs profession is the most appropriate description to use to set up a research problem regarding professional identity. The term "professional identity" is not defined by any single attribute, but is the sum of all professional aspects that comprise the professional identity in a given profession (Bodman et al., 2012; Prosek & Hurt, 2004; Rickard, 1985a, 1988). Professional identity is comprised of the performance of the role, taking into account all of the aspects of the position (Prosek & Hurt, 2004). Further, it is assumed that an SCA's skills and knowledge will develop over time, as their

experience and familiarity with their roles deepen and their confidence in their performance grows.

Based on the existing literature, there are several distinct skill sets that SCAs must master on the job. These include skills related to 1) investigative exploration (Gehring, 2006; Waller, 2013); 2) conflict resolution (ASCA, 2012); 3) application of legal knowledge (Letzring & Holcomb, 1996; McNair, 2013) and 4) relevant theory (Dowd, 2012). Each of these skills sets makes up just one aspect of the professional role of the SCA. To develop and maintain these skills, it is proposed that SCAs will also participate in appropriate training as well as engage in continuing education activities that keep them up-to-date on the field. These are aspects of professionalism that are components of a framework developed by Horton (1944, as cited in Wrenn & Darley, 1950) that included 10 specific criteria of a profession.

The 10 Criteria of a Profession

Perhaps the most comprehensive description of the qualities of a career area that supports its categorization as a profession is that developed by Horton (1944, as cited in Wrenn & Darley, 1950). This model included the following 10 criteria for determining the existence of a profession:

1. A profession must satisfy an indispensable social need and be based upon well-established and socially accepted scientific principles.
2. It must demand adequate pre-professional and cultural training.
3. It must demand the possession of a body of specialized and systematized knowledge.
4. It must give evidence of needed skills which the general public does not possess.
5. It must have developed a scientific technique which is the result of tested experience.

6. It must require the exercise of discretion and judgment as to the time and manner of the performance of duty.
7. It must be a type of beneficial work, the result of which is not subject to standardization in terms of unit performance or time element.
8. It must have a group consciousness designed to extend scientific knowledge in a technical language.
9. It must have sufficient self-impelling power to retain its members throughout life, i.e., it must not be used as a mere steppingstone to other occupations.
10. It must recognize its obligations to society by insisting that its members live up to an established and accepted code of ethics. (Horton, as cited in Wrenn & Darley, p. 265).

While the existing literature base for student conduct administration does not include existing research specifically addressing professional identity of SCAs, Horton's model provides a format for exploration of the ways in which a particular discipline measures up the status of an independent and unique profession.

Measuring Student Affairs Administration against Horton's Criteria

Six years after the development of this set of criteria, Wrenn and Darley (1950) considered whether the field of student personnel work, as it was called at the time, constituted a profession, as defined by these criteria. Although student personnel work, as a whole, did not meet the criteria to be considered a profession, their findings did indicate that some segments of student personnel work as coming closer to being considered a profession at that time than others, such as student activities and university housing. However, since that time, no other researcher has explored whether the field of student conduct administration meets these 10 criteria.

Through a careful review of the existing literature, it is apparent that the field of student conduct administration meets eight of the 10 criteria for a profession as identified by Horton (1944, as cited in Wrenn & Darley, 1950). Following are the criteria that have been supported in the literature:

Criterion 1: Indispensable Social Need and Socially Accepted Scientific Principles (e.g., see ASCA, 2012; Bickel & Lake, 2013; NCHERM, 2014; Waller, 2013)

Criterion 2: Pre-professional and Cultural Training (e.g., see ASCA, 2012; Gehring, 2006 Komives et al., 2003)

Criterion 3: Specialized and Systematized Knowledge (e.g., see Gehring, 2006; NCHERM, 2014; Waller, 2013)

Criterion 5: Scientific Technique which is the Result of Tested Experience (e.g., see NCHERM, 2014)

Criterion 6: Discretion and Judgment as to the Time and Manner of the Performance of Duty (e.g., see ASCA, 1993; Komives et al., 2003; NCHERM, 2014; US Congress, 1974; Waller, 2013)

Criterion 8: Group Consciousness (e.g., see ASCA, 2014; Rudolph 1962)

Criterion 9: Self-impelling Power to retain its Members throughout Life (e.g., see ASCA, 2016a, 2016b)

Criterion 10: Ethical Principles and Standards of Conduct (e.g., see ASCA, 1993; Dowd, 2012; Komives et al., 2003)

However, there was no evidence to support two of the criteria. These two points are the fourth one, professions require *skills not possessed by the general public*, and the seventh one, a

profession requires individuals to perform *beneficial work not subject to standardization in terms of unit performance or time element*.

Years in the Profession

The number of years in the profession, or an individual's *tenure in the profession*, for an SCA has been identified as a factor in decision making (Dowd, 2012; Hyde, 2014; Waller, 2013; Wannamaker, 2005). Waller (2013) referred to a study by Scott (2000), who surveyed SCAs with five to eight years in the profession. The results from that study highlighted particular factors considered by SCAs with that amount of experience when adjudicating cases.

In a more detailed study, Wannamaker (2005) provided the number of years in the field for 396 SCAs. The results of Wannamaker's (2005) study indicated that the longer an SCA functioned in the field of student conduct, the more selective the SCA was about the factors considered in making a decision. Some case types may become routine, but the sanctions imposed by the SCA should be appropriate for the particular student (ASCA, 2012; Waller, 2013). With more years of experience, an SCA adjudicates more conduct cases and gains more experience in identifying individual student needs, thus being able to provide individualized sanctions to a student and provide an educational opportunity (Waller, 2013).

SCAs should not simply issue the same sanctions to each student for the same violation; that may be counterproductive to the student's educational career and to the educational nature of the student conduct process (ASCA, 2012). Some institutions have a policy of mandatory or minimum sanctions for certain offense types. Minimum or mandatory sanctions negate the factor of years of experience for the SCA (NCHERM, 2014). If employed by such an institution, an SCA without the autonomy to issue individualized sanctions for an offense, regardless of his or her number of years in the profession, is placed at a disadvantage (ASCA, 2012; Dowd, 2012;

Hyde, 2014; Waller, 2013; Wannamaker, 2005). Given this information, the number of years in the profession has been identified by multiple researchers as an important factor to consider for SCAs when making a decision about a student conduct matter (Dowd, 2012; Hyde, 2014; Waller, 2013; Wannamaker, 2005). Thus, years in the profession is another facet of professional development that relates to professional identity status.

In summary, professional identity provides the basis for defining professionals in any given field, including who they are, what they do, and why they perform that line of work (Bodman et al., 2012; Cutler, 2003; Rickard, 1988). To date, there has been no conclusive evidence provided to confirm that student conduct administration is an individual, unique profession. This lack of confirming evidence warrants a further exploration of the perceptions and experiences of contemporary SCAs as they relate to the skills necessary to perform their roles. The skills sets of interest, investigatory skills, conflict resolution skills, legal knowledge, and student development/academic theory, are relevant to an SCA's ability to address each referral from the most appropriate perspective, rather than rely on a standardized, "cookie-cutter" approach to their job. Further, it is expected that the longer an individual's tenure on the job, the stronger their skill set and performance will be.

The present study was undertaken to explore the skills sets, continuing education activities, tenure in the field, and perceptions related to professional identity of individuals employed as SCAs. To determine how well the field of student conduct administration met the remaining two criteria of a profession, as outlined by Horton (1944), the following hypotheses were examined:

1. Beliefs regarding the need for investigatory skills, conflict resolutions skills, legal knowledge, and student development theory and knowledge are related to the belief that student conduct administration is an independent and unique profession.
2. Tenure in the field is related to the self-reported level of mastery of relevant skill sets.
 - a. Tenure in the field is related to self-reported mastery of investigatory skills.
 - b. Tenure in the field is related to self-reported mastery of conflict resolution skills.
 - c. Tenure in the field is related to self-reported mastery of legal knowledge.
 - d. Tenure in the field is related to self-reported mastery of discipline-specific knowledge
3. A significant amount of variance in participants' beliefs regarding the professional identity of SCAs will be accounted for by beliefs about the importance of the following variables: staying up-to-date on evolving issues and trends in the field, specialized training, and specialized skills sets.

Methodology

The target population (N) for this study included all SCAs in higher education institutions, worldwide; "N" is unknown. In an attempt to extrapolate data for "N," the researcher surveyed a sample of the population (n), which is comprised of 2,760 members of the Association for Student Conduct Administration (ASCA, 2016a). All self-reported active ASCA members received an invitation to complete the study. Based on G*Power calculations, *a priori*, it was necessary to have a minimum of 180 responses to the survey instrument to ensure validity in the results, and that not more than an acceptable level of Type I or Type II error was committed.

After receiving approval for the study from the Northern Illinois University Institutional Review Board, recruitment emails were disseminated to members of the organization that contained a link to an electronic online survey, located in Qualtrics. A total of 399 responses were received which represented a 14.4% response rate. Of that number, 329 participants provided complete data and held at least a Master's degree; however, this number exceeded the minimum *a priori* count necessary for statistical accuracy.

Participants

The resulting sample of 329 participants was a heterogeneous group of SCAs. In terms of gender identity, 54.4% were female, 43.8% were male, and the remaining 6 respondents were either transgender, gender-fluid, or chose not to respond. Regarding professional status, 37.7% were mid-level conduct administrators; 27.4% were senior-level conduct administrators; 15.8% were senior-level student affairs officers, 10.3% were entry-level conduct administrators; and 8.8% were senior level student affairs officers. In terms of years of experience, 36.5% had 5-9 years of experience; 27.4% had 0-4 years of experience; 18.2% had 10-14 years of experience; and 17.9% had 15 or more years of experience. The Master's degree was the highest degree for 77.8% of the sample; 16.7% held a doctoral degree; and 5.5% possessed a Juris Doctorate. It should be noted that membership of ASCA is disproportionally skewed, and includes more entry-level and mid-level professionals, compared with more seasoned professionals.

Instruments

Participants completed an electronic survey that included a total of 27 items developed by the researchers to gather demographic data along with information related to the variables of training, staying-up-to-date on current knowledge, and optimal skills sets. In addition to three

variable-related open-ended questions (i.e., “*Please describe any other forms of training in which you have participated (not listed above) . . .*”), 5-point Likert-scale items (1=“*Not at all important;*” 5=“*Extremely important*”) were used to assess participants’ beliefs about the importance of specialized training through questions related to interest in and participation in training events; the importance of staying up-to-date on trends and issues in the field; and the importance of specific skills sets for effective job performance. A single Likert-scale item (1=“*Strongly disagree;*” 5=“*Strongly agree*”) was used to assess the belief that the field of student conduct administration could be categorized as an independent and unique profession. The Cronbach’s alpha was .69 was for this sample.

Results

Data were analyzed using SPSS 22.0.1 and an alpha of .05 was set for determining statistical significance. Descriptive statistics were calculated for all demographic variables and for each item on the survey. Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients, multivariate analyses of variance (ANOVA) and regression analysis were used to examine the research hypotheses. In Table 1, the means and standard deviations for the study variables are presented.

Insert Table 1 About Here

Optimal Skills Sets and Professional Identity Status

A Pearson product-moment correlation was calculated to test the first hypothesis that the possession of specific skills sets were necessary for optimal job performance was related to the belief that SCAs possess an independent and unique professional identity. This calculation revealed a significant positive correlation between the following variables: the belief that student conduct administration is an independent and unique profession and investigatory skills ($r = .225$), conflict resolution skills ($r = .114$), and legal knowledge ($r = .216$), as presented in Table 2.

There was no relationship found between the belief that student conduct administration was an independent and unique profession and the possession of discipline-specific knowledge or theory (i.e., student development theory or academic achievement theory). However, as noted in Table 2, significant positive correlations were revealed among all four of the skills sets. The first hypothesis was partially supported.

Insert Table 2 About Here

Tenure in the Field and Mastery of Skills Sets

The second hypothesis stated that a participant's tenure in the field (e.g., 0-4 years, 5-9 years, 10-14 years, 15 or more years) was related to self-reported mastery of four specific skills sets: investigatory skills, conflict resolution skills, legal knowledge, and knowledge of discipline-specific theory (See Table 3). A separate sub-hypothesis was created for each skills set and four separate ANOVA calculations were conducted. In the case that significant results were revealed, a Tukey's Honestly Significant Difference post-hoc test was calculated to determine which of the age groups were statistically different from the others.

Investigatory Skills

Tenure in the field was significantly and positively related to the self-reported level of mastery of investigatory skills ($F=8.802$; $df=3$, $p<.001$). The longer one's tenure on the job, the higher the level of self-reported mastery investigatory skills. Individuals with 0-4 years on the job had significantly lower levels of self-mastery than all other groups. There were no other statistically significant differences between the other groups.

Conflict Resolution Skills

Tenure in the field was significantly and positively related to the self-reported level of mastery of conflict resolution skills ($F=4.680$; $df=3$, $p=.003$). The longer one's tenure on the job,

the higher the level of self-reported mastery of conflict resolution skills. Individuals with 0-4 years on the job or 5-9 years on the job revealed significantly lower levels of self-mastery of conflict resolution skills than those with 15 or more years of experience. There were no other statistically significant differences between the remaining groups.

Legal Knowledge

Tenure in the field was significantly and positively related to the self-reported level of mastery of legal knowledge (including professionally relevant federal and state laws) ($F=12.447$; $df=3$, $p<.001$). The longer one's tenure on the job, the higher the level of self-reported mastery of legal knowledge. Individuals with 0-4 years on the job had significantly lower levels of self-mastery than all other groups; individuals with 5-9 years on the job had significantly lower levels of self-mastery than those with 15 or more years on the job. There were no other significant differences between the remaining groups.

Discipline-Specific Knowledge

Length of time on the job was significantly and positively related to the self-reported level of mastery of discipline specific theories (including student development, academic achievement, etc.) ($F=7.995$; $df=3$, $p<.001$). The longer one's tenure on the job, the higher the level of self-reported mastery of discipline-specific knowledge. Individuals with 0-4 years on the job had significantly lower levels of self-mastery than those with 5-9 years or over 15 years on the job. There were no other significant differences between the remaining groups. The second hypothesis, that tenure in the field was related to self-reported mastery of skills, was supported.

Insert Table 3 About Here

Predictors of Belief regarding the Professional Identity of SCAs

The third hypothesis stated that a significant amount of the variance in belief that SCAs possess an independent and unique professional identity would be accounted for by the participants' perceptions of the importance of the following variables: staying up-to-date, engaging in specialized training, investigatory skills, conflict resolution skills, legal knowledge, and knowledge of discipline-specific theory. To test this hypothesis, these six variables were entered into a stepwise regression equation. The standardized regression coefficients were analyzed to determine the predictive value of these variables regarding the belief that SCAs have an independent and unique professional identity. The results indicated that there was a collective significant effect between the importance of specialized training, investigatory skills, and belief regarding the professional identity of SCAs ($F(2, 326) = 21.297, p < .001, R^2 = .11$); these two variables account for 11% of the variance in beliefs related to professional identity. The individual predictors were examined further and revealed that specialized training ($\beta = .263, t(2, 326) = 4.885, p < .001$) and investigatory skills ($\beta = .159, t(2, 326) = 2.952, p = .003$) were significant predictors in the model. Thus, the third hypothesis was supported.

Discussion

A study of 329 SCAs, holding at least a Master's degree, was conducted to explore the professional identity status of the field of student conduct administration. Three specific hypotheses were explored and each of them was supported by the findings. It is apparent that student conduct administration meets the criteria for categorization as an independent and unique profession. In addition, it is clear that while SCAs do value the education they receive regarding discipline-specific theory, the skills that they find most applicable to their professional identity are investigatory skills, conflict resolution skills, and legal knowledge. Perhaps not surprisingly, the longer one's tenure in the field, the stronger their mastery of these skills. Lastly, it was found

that the importance of participation in specialized training and possession of investigatory skills predicted participants' beliefs about the professional identity of SCAs.

Implications for Educational Preparation of SCAs

As the world grows more complex, the types of issues faced by SCAs will also grow more complex. The findings of this study emphasize the need for these individuals to develop and maintain strong skills related to incident investigation to ensure that they are proficient in their role. While the responsibilities of the SCA include meting out sanctions, as required, the overarching purpose of student conduct administration in higher education institutions is to be educational, not punitive (Stoner II & Lowery, 2004; Waller 2013). Thus, the practice of student conduct incorporates the skills and knowledge from multiple fields, including critical thinking (education), investigatory skills, and legal knowledge (law and law enforcement), and conflict resolution (psychology). Unfortunately, regardless of an individual's undergraduate field of study, it is unlikely that students entering graduate programs in higher education and student affairs will be bringing with them knowledge or coursework from all of the relevant subject areas. However, graduate programs may be able to help better prepare future student conduct professionals.

While graduate programs in higher education or student affairs, specifically, are the most appropriate locations to train future SCAs, some programs may benefit from curricular updates that address the skills sets most valued by professionals. Course projects may be added that would encourage students to sharpen their investigatory skills through problem-based learning exercises. These could be incorporated into existing courses while providing students with opportunities to develop their inductive and deductive reasoning skills. Additionally, conflict resolution is another area in which experiential practice in graduate programs may be of

significant value to career development, as SCAs in the study felt this skill was also key to their performance.

Focused study of relevant legal issues and trends in higher education law also should be included in coursework. Learning the letter of the law should be combined with opportunities to explore the practical application of policy and law through practice cases and experiential role-play. As SCAs revealed, theoretical knowledge is valuable and provides a foundation for their roles, knowledge of legal issues and policy are essential to their success on the job.

A niche that some graduate programs may consider addressing is the development of specific program tracks for students interested in pursuing careers in student conduct. This would provide an opportunity to offer courses that specifically explore content areas related to student conduct administration as well as offer experiential practice in integrating and applying this knowledge. Specific courses might address such topics as “Legal Issues related to Student Conduct” and “Conflict Resolution on the College Campus.” In light of the challenges of adding new courses to degree programs, students who express interest in careers in student conduct could be encouraged to seek out courses beyond their program that are related to areas such as helping skills, conflict resolution, and legal issues and policy in higher education. Student development theory courses could be enriched to ensure that students can understand the ways in which student conduct violations are perceived differently based on developmental level as well as the ways in which sanctions may need to differ based on developmental levels.

Implications for Current Practice of SCAs

The results of this study give evidence that job experience enhances an SCA’s confidence in their skills and their self-reported mastery of the skills needed to effectively perform their jobs. While specialized training may not be available in every graduate preparation program,

relevant seminars, workshops, and trainings can be of significant benefit to early and mid-career SCAs.

The seismic shifts in the use of and capabilities of educational technology platforms generates the need for specialized training in the impact of technology on student conduct issues. For example, it is not enough for a SCA to know that the educational software program Blackboard™ accepts assignments or exams from students. It is necessary to know that all access attempts and actions are logged within the system and that these system logs can be accessed and viewed by faculty for the course and system administrators. It is necessary to know that error messages in Blackboard™ are rare and often unique, thus screenshots should be captured to verify the authenticity of a particular error message. If SCAs are unfamiliar with the technical workings of computer programs, their jobs can be made more difficult.

Specialized training in the areas of legal issues and policy may also be especially valuable as these can change to keep up with new technologies and cultural shifts. However, it is important that SCAs not lose sight of the fact that the student conduct process should never serve as a substitute for the legal process. The student conduct process is an educational process that provides students the opportunity to learn from their mistakes. SCAs, as do all student affairs professionals, have an obligation to grow with their students as civilization shifts and grows in complexity, while keeping the tenets of the profession at the forefront of their minds as they perform their responsibilities.

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Table 1**Descriptive Statistics for Study Variables**

Variable	Mean	SD
Specialized Training		
<i>Importance of specialized training</i>	4.53	.624
Staying Up-to-date		
<i>Importance of staying up-to-date</i>	4.72	.514
Specialized Skills		
Optimal performance-investigatory skills	4.41	.702
Optimal performance-conflict resolution skills	4.25	.756
Optimal performance-legal knowledge	4.33	.703
Optimal performance-discipline-specific theory	4.01	.848
Professional Identity		
Unique professional identity	4.39	.749

Table 2**Correlations between SCA as a Profession and Optimal Importance of Skills Sets**

	1	2	3	4	5
1. SCA Profession	-				
2. Investigatory Skills	.225**	-			
3. Conflict resolution skills	.114*	.394**	-		
4. Legal knowledge	.216**	.404**	.248**	-	
5. Discipline-specific theory	.035	.124*	.297**	.329**	-

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 3

Tenure in the Field and Skills Mastery

Years in Field	Investigatory		Conflict		Legal		Discipline-	
	Skills		Resolution Skills		Knowledge		Specific Theory	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Total (<i>n</i> =329)	3.89	.852	3.85	.826	3.59	.0949	3.83	.833
0-4 (<i>n</i> =90)	3.54	.863	3.72	.948	3.17	1.019	3.53	.877
5-9 (<i>n</i> =120)	3.92	.866	3.73	.775	3.58	.923	.87	.788
10-14 (<i>n</i> =60)	4.07	.800	4.00	.664	3.83	.827	3.87	.791
15+ (<i>n</i> =59)	4.19	.682	4.14	.104	4.02	.731	4.19	.754